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# On Philosophical Method and Analogical Fallacies

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***Abstract***

This article investigates the role played by the analysis of nonliteral language in Wittgenstein's later philosophical method. In the first section, I briefly present his motivations for abandoning the Tractarian method and developing a new one, which is centered on the ideas of family resemblances and the overview or synoptic presentation of grammar. In the second section, I offer an account that attempts to unify the apparent variety of what Glock called "roots of […] philosophical confusion" by treating one of the items in his list, "analogies in the surface grammar of logically distinct expressions", as the most central target of methodological synopsis. I conclude that the figurative use of ordinary-language terms in philosophical discourse generates the majority of our philosophical problems and that its investigation should therefore be seen as one of the defining features of Wittgenstein's later philosophical method.

## *1. Of methods old and new*

Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophical method emerged in response to the limitations of his own earlier conception of language in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which aimed to distinguish sense from nonsense through logico-syntactic analysis (TS 220: 60). Influenced by Frank Ramsey's criticisms, he came to see his older method as incapable of accounting for the internal complexity of certain propositions and the inferences they introduce (Ramsey 1923; RLF). Thus, from the mid-1930s onward, he placed his hopes in a different type of grammatical investigation, which was no longer grounded in an absolute distinction between the meaningful and the nonsensical, but in uncovering the intricate ways language functions within various practical contexts of use.

This is quite evident in one of his lectures from the early 1930s, transcribed by G. E. Moore, where he suggests that terms such as "sense", "proposition",

"grammar", "grammatical rule", and "syntax" lacked sharp boundaries and instead altered their meaning across different instances of use (M: 273–274). Moreover, by the time of the *Big Typescript*, he had already concluded that expressions such as "game", "proposition", and "language" shared the inherent "blurriness" of all concept-words (BT: 56e; PI: §135). One notable source of this blurriness is, of course, *family resemblances*, a notion that was beginning to take shape and assume a central role in Wittgenstein's new philosophy. It seems to be the case that the majority of concepts relevant to philosophical inquiry are, indeed, grounded in family resemblances – as illustrated by the metasemantic concepts above.

One obvious consequence of this change was the inability to make a sharp distinction between the meaningful and the nonsensical the ultimate goal of philosophical clarification of language, as was the case in his earlier method. But if this distinction was no longer possible, what was philosophy's task now? Even without absolute criteria for such a distinction, Wittgenstein could still identify the philosophical misuse of words that were extracted from their ordinary context of use and grafted onto the abstract domain of philosophical discourse. Thus, one could say that the semantic sense-nonsense distinction of his earlier method was replaced by the pragmatic question of whether an expression has a use (Engelmann 2013: 174–176). For this reason, Wittgenstein did not abandon the idea of philosophy as linguistic clarification, though he reconceived it as an a posteriori, case-by-case grammatical investigation of how words are used and reused.

From that point onward, central to Wittgenstein's later method was the concept of *synopsis* or *synoptic presentation* – my preferred translation among various options in the English-language literature for "*Übersicht*" and "*übersichtliche Darstellung*" (Pichler 2023: 17). The function of methodical synopsis is to present patterns of word use and their grammatical constraints in a perspicuous way; to show what is grammatical and ungrammatical in our language. Hence, a synoptic presentation of the grammar of color terms will show that their predication to an object precludes the predication of a whole gamut of other color terms to it. Similarly, a synopsis of the grammar of avowals will show that first-person utterances about our own mental states do not share the same verification method as propositions in a physicalist language; whereas a synopsis of terms denoting sense impressions, that there

is no distinction between seeming and being in propositions about phenomenology.

At this point, however, we may ask: what causes the grammatical mistakes that the synoptic method aims to make perspicuous? In the *Tractatus*, the main sources of such troubles were the unwitting use of empty terms and syntactically anomalous propositions, which generated nonsense. But if the later Wittgenstein moves away from demarcating sense from nonsense in this way, what does a synoptic presentation reveal? My main thesis here is that methodical synopsis targets a specific class of linguistic phenomena. As I will show in the next paragraphs, well-guided philosophy focuses on dispelling perplexities arising from the unreflective use of figurative language – such as analogies, metaphors, similes, and what Wittgenstein called "pictures" (*Bilder*). These figurative expressions are not exclusive to philosophical discourse; they are deeply embedded in everyday language and essential to communication. However, while they typically function smoothly in ordinary contexts, in philosophical speculation they often become misleading, precisely because they are rooted out of the language games and forms of life that originally gave them meaning.

## *2. The root causes of philosophical perplexity*

Hans-Johann Glock offers a helpful, though not exhaustive, typology of the main causes of philosophical problems that can be addressed through Wittgenstein's synoptic method (Glock 1996: 280). In the absence of a universally accepted survey of these sources of perplexity, I will adopt Glock's list as a heuristic framework. Equivalent or closely related categories can also be found in other key contributions to the secondary literature, most notably in G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker's analytical commentary on the *Philosophical Investigations* and Severin Schroeder's *Wittgenstein: The Way Out of the Fly-Bottle* (Baker & Hacker 2005: 277–283; Schroeder 2006: ch. 4.3). I have included references to these works alongside each item in the list below, together with brief remarks where appropriate. In the subsequent sections, I will return to these correspondences and comment in more detail on how each author characterizes the relevant sources of philosophical confusion. According to Glock, the "roots of […] philosophical confusion" typically lie in one or more of the following items, which I have slightly reordered to better suit the structure of my argument:

(I) ANALOGIES: "Analogies in the surface grammar of logically distinct expressions", such as that between names and numerals (Baker & Hacker 2005: 277–278 offers abundant examples);

(II) CRAVING FOR GENERALITY: a cognitive disposition that leads us to treat concepts of family resemblance as unitary (as I will argue in §2.2, this corresponds to cravings for generality, unity, and definitions in Baker & Hacker 2005: 282, as well as to their "obsession with a certain language form", 2005: 280);

(III) PROJECTION OF FEATURES BETWEEN LANGUAGE GAMES: this occurs, for example, when we speak of psychological experiences in terms of physical objects (Baker & Hacker 2005: 278; Schroeder 2006: ch. 4 gives various examples of such projections, which will be explored in §2.3);

(IV) PICTURES EMBEDDED IN LANGUAGE: pictures embedded in our language, such as that things go on "in our heads" (corresponds both to the "innumerable 'pictures'" mentioned in Baker & Hacker 2005: 279, as well as to their "myth building tendency" in 2005: 283; Schroeder 2006: 166 calls this "idiomatic metaphors taken literally");

(V) PHENOMENOLOGY: the accidental phenomenological characteristics of language use, as when "we associate familiar words with specific sensations, mistakenly concluding that these constitute the meaning of those words" (Schroeder 2006: 166);

(VI) PHILOSOPHICAL EMULATION OF SCIENCE: the attempt to emulate the scientific method, leading us to formulate causal answers to questions that should be tackled grammatically due to their strictly conceptual nature (Baker & Hacker 2005: 281; see also the "urge to explain phenomena" on page 283; Schroeder 2006: 162–166);

(VII) QUEST FOR THE UNCONDITIONED: the tendency to "dig ever deeper or to look for a reality behind phenomena, without recognizing when to stop" (Baker & Hacker 2005: 283, our "metaphysical urge to seek necessities").

This list identifies the main targets of the synoptic method. However, I believe it suggests excessive variety where, in reality, the core concerns are analogy, literalness, and figurativeness. I argue that each of these causes, with

the exception of the last two, can ultimately be seen as a step in the same cognitive process through which philosophical perplexity emerges. This process can be roughly outlined as follows: family resemblance conceptual categories are structured by (I) ANALOGIES, similarities which are defined in terms of shared features among different instantiations of the same concept. Because of these partial similarities, we are often led to (III) PROJECT FEATURES from one language game onto another. It is our (II) CRAVING FOR GENERALITY – i.e., for conceptual unity – that drives this projection. The end result, when a whole family of semantically related analogical mappings is formed, are (IV) PICTURES EMBEDDED IN LANGUAGE, which, once established, shape our reasoning through automatic, unconscious inferences in philosophical argument. (V) PHENOMENOLOGY is a recurrent source of the analogical mappings that underlie philosophical pictures. Finally, the (VI) PHILOSOPHICAL EMULATION OF SCIENCE and the (VII) QUEST FOR THE UNCONDITIONED can be seen as metaphilosophical cases of the very same picture-forming process described above, when applied in reflections about the nature of philosophy itself.[1]

Finally, it is worth noticing that an exhaustive taxonomy of the causes of philosophical perplexity may not be possible, which is why I cautiously qualify the scope of my explanation as encompassing a *majority* of philosophical problems, instead of straightforwardly affirming that what I will describe applies indiscriminately to *all* philosophical problems. Baker & Hacker rightly notice that, for Wittgenstein, "[p]hilosophy […] is nothing but philosophical problems", and these "[…] are best characterized by examples, for they form a family that is not fruitfully circumscribed by an analytic definition" (Baker & Hacker 2005: 277). In other words, the very concepts of "philosophy" and "philosophical problems" seem to be grounded on family resemblances – an unsurprising idea, in view of Wittgenstein's willingness to thus classify other metatheoretical notions – and, hence, they are also open-ended.

[1] As a description of the cognitive process underlying philosophical perplexity, my account bears similarities to the one presented by Eugen Fischer in *Philosophical Delusion and its Therapy* and related articles (Fischer 2007; 2011; 2023). As I understand it, Fischer's project aims to revitalize ordinary language philosophy by integrating empirical findings and theoretical insights from cognitive semantics to Wittgenstein's synoptic method – a synthesis that also plays a key role in §2.5 of this article. While I view this as an important project at a time when unrestrained metaphysical speculation has again become commonplace in philosophy, my own aim is more modest: I will primarily offer an alternative exegesis of Wittgenstein's later conception of philosophy and its method, making more explicit the role of unconscious analogical reasoning in the emergence of philosophical problems.

So, philosophical problems, as we will explore in the following sections, form a family-resemblance conceptual category: they do not share a single defining feature that must be preserved across all instances. When such categories expand, new instances may resemble earlier ones in different ways, but no specific characteristic – such as analogy-based reasoning – must be preserved throughout. While analogy and figurative language are central to a wide range of philosophical problems, it would be an error to assume, inductively, that all such problems must share this structure. Still, the mere possibility of exceptions does not diminish the value of the framework I propose. Given how frequently analogy, projection, and figurative extension underlie philosophical confusion, identifying their role offers valuable insight into why these problems arise and persist.

### *2.1 (I) ANALOGIES*

We begin with what Glock defines as "analogies in the surface GRAMMAR of logically distinct expressions" (Glock 1996: 280). Typically, an analogy is a comparison between two entities, intended to explain or clarify the target by highlighting relevant shared features with the source.[2] However, our focus here is not on deliberate analogies, but on those that arise unconsciously and automatically through the process that unifies family-resemblance concepts. Indeed, the introduction of family resemblance draws attention to a topic that had remained only implicit in Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy: the analogical foundations of semantics. To illustrate, consider Wittgenstein's paradigm case, the conceptual category GAME (PI: §66).

What distinguishes family-resemblance concepts is that they cannot be defined by a fixed set of necessary and sufficient conditions applicable to all members. Instead, they are characterized by a disjunctive, open-ended list of sufficient conditions. Within the conceptual category GAME, this can be interpreted in analogical terms (PI: §75): *football* is analogous to *basketball* in that there are, among other shared features, balls involved in both games; *basketball* is analogous to *chess* in that both games involve – again, among other shared features – winning or losing; chess is analogous to *Monopoly* in that they both

[2] The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) offers the following definition of "analogy": "A comparison between things that have similar features, often used to help explain a principle or idea". Contemporary research in cognitive psychology also seem to endorse this similarity-based definition, as shown by the two most influential frameworks in analogy studies: Dedre Gentner's structural-mapping theory (1983) and Keith Holyoak and Paul Thagard's multiconstraint theory (1989).

require, *inter alia*, a board and pieces to be played; *Monopoly* is analogous to *videogames* in that they both simulate real-world scenarios, etc. However, these various instantiations are fundamentally distinct, and their conceptual unification serves only practical requirements of everyday language use, given by the contingent ways in which we carry out our communal activities, our forms of life.

Their differences are often cloaked by accidental features of our language and, in order to elucidate them, one needs to engage in a very peculiar type of grammatical investigation, whose aim is precisely producing a synoptic presentation of the meaning of the relevant words. Particularly noteworthy among such accidental features is polysemy. While it is often treated as an independent phenomenon, polysemy is best understood as a linguistic consequence of family resemblance. Family-resemblance concepts expand through overlapping similarities among their instances, without requiring that any single feature be shared by all members. In contrast, polysemy emerges when a word undergoes semantic extension, often through metaphorical or metonymic shifts, introducing new meanings that, while related, diverge in significant ways from the original sense, even if an analogical relation is preserved.

To illustrate, the conceptual category game is a family-resemblance concept: its members – e.g., football, chess, Monopoly – share partial similarities without necessitating a change in the meaning of the word "game" itself. On the other hand, a word like "head" is polysemous because it has multiple distinct but related meanings: a head as a body part; the head of an organization – i.e., its leader – ; the head of a table, which is usually the host's seat; or the head of a river, its source. Unlike family-resemblance concepts, which maintain continuities of meaning, polysemy involves semantic shifts that introduce new inferential structures. Thus, while family-resemblance concepts and polysemy share a common mechanism of semantic expansion, they operate differently: family-resemblance concepts expand by accumulating partially overlapping similarities among instances without requiring a drastic shift in meaning; whereas polysemous terms develop distinct but conceptually linked meanings through semantic extension, often metaphorical or metonymic. Both phenomena are relevant when constructing a grammatical synopsis.

One of the first steps in constructing a perspicuous, synoptic presentation of a word's grammar is identifying analogues within its family-resemblance

category and distinguishing the features they share from those they do not.[3] In fact, the concept GAME is unlikely to generate philosophical confusion, given its marginal role in the discipline; thus, a synopsis of its grammar is of limited interest here. However, many other concepts central to philosophical speculation – such as OBJECT, SUBSTANCE, SPACE, TIME, TRUTH, etc. – warrant synoptic analysis. Consider, for example, the concept-word OBJECT. Now, this family resemblance conceptual category includes the more specific lexical senses $\text{OBJECT}_1$ – i.e., concrete, physical objects – and $\text{OBJECT}_2$ – i.e., abstract objects, such as mental ($O_{2.1}$), mathematical ($O_{2.2}$), and social objects ($O_{2.3}$). Whereas the word "object" can be understood in the first sense, which narrows down its extension to physical objects only, it can also be understood more broadly, incorporating both physical objects and *abstracta*. Presumably, these share significant features, justifying their classification under the category OBJECT. Among others, they can be individuated and cognitively isolated from other objects within or across ontological categories; they can enter into relations and interact with objects from the same or different ontological domains; and they can be referred to and represented linguistically or by other means. However, a closer examination of their grammatical behavior reveals substantial differences among them.

Take, for instance, the ways each one relates to the concept of IDENTITY, often considered essential for individuating objects both diachronically and synchronically. The criteria for ascribing identity to physical objects differ markedly from those applied to mental, mathematical, or social objects. For physical objects, a key distinction is between numerical and qualitative identity – i.e., token and type identity – but this distinction does not clearly apply to certain $\text{OBJECTS}_2$, such as beliefs and numbers. Moreover, we can speak of the identity of physical objects both diachronically (across time) and synchronically (at a specific time). While we may consider the numerical identity of a physical

[3] It is important to clarify that analogy is a graded notion, and not an all-or-nothing matter. Analogies, after all, vary in strength from weak – where only very few features are shared between analogues – to strong – with many shared features. Philosophical confusion characteristically arises in intermediate cases where similarities are compelling enough to invite projection and inference, yet differences remain sufficiently obscured that extending the analogy leads us astray. Analogies at the extremes – i.e., those involving minimal shared features or near-identity – are less prone to generating philosophical perplexity. At the weak extreme, the paucity of similarities makes these analogies too obviously inadequate to sustain extended philosophical reasoning. At the strong extreme, near-identical entities make their differences perspicuous, while their relationship of sameness-of-kind often overrides the relevance of describing them as merely analogous.

object to persist over time, mathematical identity is defined by the preservation of truth across all values of the variables in an expression, rendering temporal considerations irrelevant. Physical identity can be preserved despite complete material turnover, as long as the general functional organization of the object remains intact. However, additional properties – such as appearance – often influence judgments of identity. If, after a gradual replacement of all its parts, the Ship of Theseus came to resemble the RMS Queen Mary, many would struggle to accept that its identity had been preserved. In contrast, social institutions, such as "the U.S. Congress" or "the dollar", may persist despite radical material changes – such as replacing all U.S. congressmen and relocating the institution from Washington, D.C., to Chicago, or adopting an entirely new design for the dollar bill. This is because, in most cases, identity criteria for social objects are defined strictly in functional terms. Finally, establishing widely accepted identity criteria for mental objects remains notoriously difficult.

It seems that the concept-word IDENTITY itself functions as a family-resemblance concept – encompassing distinct senses such as $\text{IDENTITY}_1$, which applies to identity relations among physical objects; $\text{IDENTITY}_2$, used in reference to mathematical objects; $\text{IDENTITY}_3$, applicable to mental objects; and so forth. Therefore, *prima facie*, it would be a grammatical mistake, for instance, to predicate $\text{IDENTITY}_1$ of mental objects, or $\text{IDENTITY}_2$ of physical objects. Such a mistake, of course, does not occur in ordinary discourse – where context disambiguates the relevant relation – , but is frequent at the level of philosophical reflection, where one may treat distinct uses of "identity" as if they shared a single logical grammar. These are fundamentally different relations, and their distinct grammatical structures govern what counts as sound reasoning within each domain. At this point, one might suppose that we have found a solution to the normative problem of distinguishing sense from nonsense, which troubled Wittgenstein in the 1930s, following his discovery that metalinguistic concepts are also structured by family resemblance.

The proposed solution would be: given a family-resemblance conceptual category O, composed of senses $O_1$ and $O_2$, each associated with a corresponding feature $f_1$ and $f_2$, nonsense arises when feature $f_2$ is predicated of object $O_1$, or vice-versa. However, this is not quite the case. As we will see in the next sections, the projection of features from one member to another within a family-resemblance category is a common and legitimate move in

ordinary discourse, not a distinctive hallmark of misguided philosophical speculation. Such predication is generally figurative – which is unproblematic in everyday language, where literal truth is rarely at stake. But in philosophical contexts, these figurative projections can become misleading and generate conceptual confusion. Before moving on to these issues, however, let us discuss some further aspects of categorial structure.

### *2.2 (II) CRAVING FOR GENERALITY*

The disjunctive structure of family-resemblance conceptual categories is essential for keeping concepts open-ended, allowing them to incorporate new members as language and forms of life evolve – in other words, preventing them from becoming mere conceptual fossils. The plasticity of categories shaped by family resemblance and polysemy is a crucial productive principle in language. It enables us to expand a category's initial scope to include new, analogous instances of use, making it possible to articulate new experiences for which we lack established linguistic means of expression. At the same time, however, the absence of a fixed set of necessary and sufficient conditions for category membership can provoke a "craving for generality" – as the linguistic irregularities produced by family resemblance may feel unsettling or even vertiginous. In the *Blue Book*, when discussing the sources of this craving for generality, Wittgenstein makes the following remarks:

> This craving for generality is the resultant of a number of tendencies connected with particular philosophical confusions. There is—
>
> (a) The tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term.—We are inclined to think that there must be something in common to all games, say, and that this common property is the justification for applying the general term "game" to various games; whereas games form a family the members of which have family likenesses (BBB: 17).

Perhaps precisely because we cannot identify a single common feature, we often generalize properties that are prevalent within a family-resemblance category to all or most of its members – unwarrantedly and unconsciously. This process of generalization is not premeditated but automatic, shaped by our cognitive tendencies. To understand this, we must examine the internal structure of family-resemblance concepts in more detail. Wittgenstein's idea of family-resemblance concepts was likely that of an ultimately unstructured semantic nexus. However, when considering his various examples of what

qualifies as a game, it is difficult not to feel that some seem somewhat inadequate. In §66 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, for instance, he notes: "In ball games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared" (PI: §66). Although the German term "*Spiel*" is broader than its English counterpart, encompassing unstructured ludic activities like the one Wittgenstein describes, many would still perhaps hesitate to classify something as simple as throwing a ball against a wall and catching it as "*ein Spiel*" – though they would readily describe it by using the verb "*spielen*".

Even if it should be considered a game, it clearly seems a less adequate example than "board games, card games, […] Olympic games, and so on". Its tenuous membership in the category GAME is secondary to its resemblance to more canonical exemplars, such as basketball and football. As noticed by Glock, in the German translation of the *Brown Book* – provisionally titled *Eine Philosophische Betrachtung* – Wittgenstein entertained the possibility that family-resemblance concepts might "[…] evolve around one or more 'cent[er]s of variation', paradigmatic cases such as football in the case of 'game', to which we relate other cases on different grounds […]" (Glock 1996: 123). However, this remark was omitted from the *Philosophical Investigations*. While the diagnostic attention to analogical reasoning itself remains central throughout his mature work (see Engelmann 2013, ch. 5), a specific meta-level theorization about the internal organization of family-resemblance concepts around paradigms appears only in the middle period. In my view, this is unfortunate, as developing this line of thought more explicitly would have further illuminated the important yet underappreciated role of analogical fallacies as a target of the synoptic method.

As the Wittgenstein-inspired studies on prototype theory by Eleanor Rosch and her associates in the 1970s suggest, a member's centrality within a family-resemblance category depends on the number of category-defining features it possesses (Rosch & Mervis 1975). In a category such as OBJECT, it is reasonable to assume that $\text{OBJECT}_1$ – concrete, physical objects – are more central than $\text{OBJECT}_2$ – abstract objects – precisely because they concentrate more defining features. Examples of such features include spatiality, three-dimensionality, locality, form, size, materiality, sensory perceivability, color, texture, density, mass, subjection to physical laws, durability, and manipulability. In fact, we frequently generalize features from central to peripheral members, and this

phenomenon is so widespread and essential to language development that it is difficult to imagine communication without it. Interestingly, however, while these features apply literally to central members, their application to peripheral members is figurative or metaphorical. A clear example of this process is found in the ascription of spatial properties – such as location and form – to abstract objects. When we say that a physical object is located in a box, we speak literally; but when we say that an idea is located in the mind, we speak figuratively.

It is important to note, however, that while Rosch & Mervis' prototype model shares Wittgenstein's insight that concepts have central and peripheral members, there is a crucial difference. In prototype categories, centrality is typically stable, based on a fixed gradient of features. In contrast, in family-resemblance concepts, the center of variation is fluid and context-dependent. A concept may exhibit different centers in different circumstances without transitioning into a new conceptual category. This flexibility distinguishes family resemblance from fuzzy concepts structured around a prototype, where a single fixed center gradually fades toward the periphery.

In their survey, Baker & Hacker explicitly identify "craving for generality" as one of the causes of philosophical confusion (Baker & Hacker 2005: 282). However, they also list "craving for unity" and "craving for definitions" as additional causes. These three types of cravings should, I believe, be seen as different aspects of the same psychological disposition. Because we crave unity and seek to "[…] subsume the greatest multiplicity of phenomena under a single all-encompassing law", the fundamentally unstable structure of family-resemblance concepts provokes a craving for generality – that is, for universal rules and laws that should guarantee semantic stability (Baker & Hacker 2005: 282). This, in turn, is the ultimate source of our craving for definitions – or more specifically, for analytic definitions. Moreover, "obsession with a certain form of language", another item on Baker & Hacker's list, can also be understood as stemming from our innate cravings for generality and unity. When illustrating this, the authors refer to the Tractarian fixation on the "[…] declarative form of sentences, viz. 'such-and-such is thus-and-so'" – a projection of features from one specific sentential form onto language as a whole (Baker & Hacker 2005: 280).

### *2.3 (III) PROJECTION OF FEATURES BETWEEN LANGUAGE GAMES*

Because analogy is a central and productive principle in language, its use in generating figurative expressions to conceptualize the abstract is not inherently problematic – it is, in fact, a fundamental aspect of linguistic activity. However, since no analogy is absolute, it can also give rise to confusion and perplexity, particularly when extended beyond its limits. This occurs because the source domain of an analogical transfer contains inferential relations that cannot be fully reproduced in the target domain, as not all relevant features are shared between the two analogous terms. To illustrate, let us again consider the generalization of features from concrete to abstract entities, such as mental OBJECTS$_2$. One could argue that the "tendency to project features of one language game onto another" is not limited to philosophical missteps but also occurs in ordinary discourse, particularly in the way psychological terminology develops. Just as we generalize features of central category members to peripheral ones, we often conceptualize mental entities as "objects" that participate in spatial relations within a "[…] queer kind of medium, the mind", leading to the calquing of physicalist grammar into a mentalistic language game (BBB: 3). However, the language games that structure everyday mentalistic discourse, even if built upon analogies with physicalist language, are ultimately grounded in forms of life that give them meaning:

> When we say that by our method we try to counteract the misleading effects of certain analogies, it is important that you should understand that the idea of an analogy being misleading is nothing sharply defined. […] The use of expressions constructed on genetic patterns stresses analogies between cases often far apart. And by doing this these expressions may be extremely useful (BBB: 28).

When an ordinary English speaker says they "have ideas in their mind", they do not necessarily endorse the metaphysical picture implied by this way of speaking. Consequently, even if they are willing to accept many harmless inferences – such as being able to "spread these ideas out into the world", or that "their mind contains all these new ideas" but has "no space for more" – there is always a limit to how far such reasoning can go. This limit is imposed by the structure of the language game itself, as the inferential network of the source language game is never fully transferred into the target domain. And yet, philosophical speculation often disregards such limits. When we philosophize, we are constantly tempted to extend an analogy beyond its

natural bounds, and this excess marks the point where philosophical perplexity begins to take shape:

> When words in our ordinary language have *prima facie* analogous grammars we are inclined to try to interpret them analogously; i.e. we try to make the analogy hold throughout.—We say, "The thought is not the same as the sentence; for an English and a French sentence, which are utterly different, can express the same thought". And now, as the sentences are *somewhere*, we look for a place for the thought. […]—We say, "surely the thought is *something*; it is not nothing"; and all one can answer to this is, that the word "thought" has its *use*, which is of a totally different kind from the use of the word "sentence" (BBB: 7).

The fact that English and French sentences can express the same thought despite differing in form may lead us to assume that thoughts must exist somewhere, just as sentences do. The analogy initially seems intuitive, as though thoughts were entities akin to sentences, only of a different nature. However, while sentences have spatial locations – i.e., they are in a book, on a page – thoughts do not. The analogy is thus misguided. This reflects a common philosophical tendency: trying to make sense of abstract concepts by relating them to more concrete ones. However, as Wittgenstein warns, this approach can lead to confusion if we ignore the fundamental differences between the analogues. In this case, treating sentences and thoughts as analogous obscures their distinct functions and characteristics.

The projection of features between language games is acknowledged as a very important cause of philosophical confusion in Baker & Hacker's survey. They describe this tendency as the "mistaken projection of features from one [fragment of a language game] onto another, leading to inferences and questions that fit one but not the other" (Baker & Hacker 2005: 278). Their example includes the conflation of grounds for CERTAINTY in different contexts: mathematical propositions – e.g., being certain that "$25 \times 25 = 625$" – ; commonsense certainties – e.g., that "the world has existed for a long time"; and first-person experiences – e.g., that "I have a toothache". Curiously, however, the very same mechanism seems to underlie another item in their list, "misleading features of the grammar of our language", suggesting a degree of redundancy. After all, Baker & Hacker illustrate this cause with examples that also involve the projection of features across language games: "To have a house" looks like "to have a mind"; "Jack is taller than Jill" shares grammatical form with "3 is greater than 2"; "Bachelors are unmarried" seems akin to "Bachelors are unhappy", but it is not.

As for Schroeder, similar ideas appear in his survey under several categories: i) the assumption that a word always has the same meaning, and ii) that it is always applied in the same way. These are illustrated by the belief that "the same" always refers to something unchanged in its physical constitution (e.g., Heraclitus). Additionally, there is iii) the assumption that predicates signify properties and iv) the belief that nouns always stand for objects or substances (Schroeder 2006: 166). Whereas the first case concerns the unity of meaning across different contexts, the second and third reflect a craving for generality in grammatical categories: in vain, we expect nouns, predicates, and verbs to behave consistently in both logical and grammatical terms.

### *2.4 (IV) PICTURES EMBEDDED IN LANGUAGE*

When a series of elementary analogies form a coherent inferential network that mirrors the structure of their source domain, they create a "picture" (*Bild*) embedded in language. These pictures consist of thematically related pairs of analogues, along with the inferential relations transposed from the source to the target domains. In Wittgenstein's example discussed above, the reification of thought generates one such pair: (SENTENCE, THOUGHT). This is then extended into a broader philosophical picture by linking it to another structurally related pair: (PHYSICAL SPACE, MIND). Inferential relations that hold in the source domain – physical space and written or spoken language – are projected onto the target domain of mental states and cognition. For instance, because sentences exist in books, thoughts must exist in some mental repository. Because physical spaces can be entered and exited, the mind must also be a "place" that one can introspectively explore. These inferential transfers create a misleading philosophical picture, reinforcing the notion that thinking involves manipulating inner mental objects within a spatially structured mental realm. As Wittgenstein warns, the problem arises when we become captivated by this picture, failing to recognize that it is a projection of linguistic habits rather than ontological reality. While such analogical extensions are a natural feature of language and essential for expanding its expressive power, they can be misleading in philosophical speculation.

The idea of misleading pictures embedded in language was already present in the *Blue and Brown Books* in the mid-1930s, though it reached its more refined and mature form in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Examples of such pictures abound in Wittgenstein's attempts at dissolving philosophical difficulties, and

while they are not always explicitly named, some are particularly salient and clearly individuated. For instance, the Augustinian picture of language, introduced at the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations*, generalizes features of prototypical word types (e.g., nouns) to all linguistic entities (PI: §1). The Cartesian picture of the mind as an inner space, based on the reification and spatialization of the psychological, is an implicit target of Wittgenstein's arguments in §§243–315. Another example is the picture of mathematical infinity as actuality, where features of extensionality are improperly attributed to strictly intensional mathematical expressions (Glock 1996: 174–179; RFM). In the present section, to illustrate how a grammatical picture can lead to philosophical perplexity, I will briefly discuss the Augustinian picture of time, included in the *Philosophical Investigations* (§§89–90) but appearing originally in the *Blue Book*, where Wittgenstein describes it as follows:

> Consider as an example the question "What is time?" as Saint Augustine and others have asked it. At first sight, what this question asks for is a definition, but then immediately the question arises: "What should we gain by a definition, as it can only lead us to other undefined terms?" [...] Now a definition often clears up the grammar of a word. And in fact it is the grammar of the word "time" which puzzles us. [...] Now the puzzlement about the grammar of the word "time" arises from what one might call apparent contradictions in that grammar. [...] It was such a "contradiction" which puzzled Saint Augustine when he argued: How is it possible that one should measure time? For the past can't be measured, as it is gone by; and the future can't be measured because it has not yet come. And the present can't be measured for it has no extension (BBB: 26–27).

Because we conceptualize the abstract through the concrete, one of the most frequently recurring analogical fallacies in language is the reification of abstract concepts, attributing to them objecthood – as in the case of treating time as an object. When reflecting on what enables us to measure time, Augustine operated within this conceptual framework, assuming a fundamental similarity between different uses of "to measure": in the case of physical objects, measurement is performed with rulers and measuring tapes, while for time, the relevant tools are clocks (Engelmann 2013: 183–184). However, the actions involved in these two instances of the polysemous concept-word MEASURE could not be more distinct.

This alone should make clear that the present's lack of extension is irrelevant to the measurement of time. By hypostatizing time and incorporating it – however peripherally – into the conceptual category OBJECT, Augustine

then projects an additional feature of physical objects: movement. In the case of physical objects, movement is literally understood as spatial displacement; in the case of time, it is reinterpreted metaphorically to describe the dynamic relation between past, present, and future. This explains why Augustine, in describing the paradox, uses expressions like "the past [...] is gone by" and "the future [...] has not yet come". Unsurprisingly, Wittgenstein's conclusion is the following:

> The contradiction which here seems to arise could be called a conflict between two different usages of a word, in this case, the word "measure". Augustine, we might say, thinks of the process of measuring a length, say, the distance between two marks on a traveling band which passes us, and of which we can only see a tiny bit (the present) in front of us. Solving this puzzle will consist of comparing what we mean by "measurement" (the grammar of the word "measurement") when applied to a distance on a traveling band with the grammar of that word when applied to time. The problem may seem simple, but its extreme difficulty is due to the fascination which the analogy between two similar structures in our language can exert on us. (It is helpful here to remember that it is sometimes almost impossible for a child to believe that one word can have two meanings.) (BBB: 27)

Wittgenstein's later philosophical method is largely based on the grammatical elucidation of expressions used in formulating philosophical problems, as his interpretation of Augustine's time paradox illustrates. Because concepts like "measure" and "measurement" apply to a wide range of activities and vary depending on the language game, Wittgenstein's method frequently involves identifying elusive cases of polysemy, which may be camouflaged by family-resemblance relations. Measuring a physical object and measuring time are fundamentally different activities, yet they can play analogous roles in everyday life – in the organization of work and productivity in the industrial era, in the quantified scientific interpretation of the world, and in other forms of life characteristic of modernity. For Wittgenstein, philosophical misunderstandings often arise from the inadequate extension of such analogies. Consequently, one of philosophy's most crucial tasks is "[…] to warn against false comparisons [and] analogies that underlie – without us being fully aware of them – our modes of expression" (MS 109: 174).

Pictures also appear in Baker & Hacker's survey, both as (c) "innumerable 'pictures' embedded in the grammar of our language" and as part of our (k) "myth-building tendency" – a proneness to erect mythologies instead of simply describing phenomena (Baker & Hacker 2005: 279, 283). That these myths are

nothing more than philosophical pictures in the sense discussed here is evident from their examples: "a mythology of the mind as a space, of time as a river, of space as a receptacle, of introspection as a form of perception", as well as the "computational mechanism attributed to the mind or 'mind/brain' by modern cognitive science and linguistic theory" (Baker & Hacker 2005: 283). Although Schroeder does not explicitly call them pictures, he similarly acknowledges their role in the emergence of philosophical problems. He describes "unanswerable questions generated by taking idiomatic metaphors literally", exemplified by Socrates' argument for the existence of what we judge based on structural analogies between verbs of perception and verbs of thinking (Schroeder 2006: 166; Plato, *Theaetetus* 188e–189a). This example also illustrates another item on his list: "verbs of thinking must function like verbs of perception".

### *2.5 (V) PHENOMENOLOGY*

I have outlined the mechanism by which a philosophical picture – the quintessential *locus* of philosophical perplexity – emerges. What remains to be explained is why certain senses within a family-resemblance category – for example, physical objects rather than abstract ones – tend to concentrate more category-defining features and thus serve as the source domain for analogical projections in the formation of philosophical pictures. Here, I will argue that these central members are typically those more directly tied to perceptual phenomenology, which explains why they exhibit a higher degree of concreteness than peripheral ones. This idea has already been touched upon *en passant* in previous sections.

The relevance of perceptual phenomenology to Wittgenstein's synoptic method lies in its role as a source domain for analogies that generate some of the most persistent philosophical problems. This expansion typically occurs when terms from an experientially salient source domain – such as our perception of the physical environment – are applied to a more abstract target domain, such as our psychological makeup. In this process, language used to describe our immediate environment and bodily states tends to be regarded as more basic or primary, while corresponding terms in abstract domains often acquire a derivative or metaphorical status. This explains why phenomenologically salient members of a family-resemblance category – such as enclosed physical spaces for the concept SPACE or material objects for the

concept OBJECT – serve as paradigms for analogical extensions to more peripheral members of the same category. Examples include metaphorical spaces like "the mind" or metaphorical objects like "a thought" or "an idea". This does not mean that words are literal simply because their referents are salient. Rather, perceptually salient cases tend to provide the prototypical uses of certain terms, shaping how they are later extended in figurative ways. Wittgenstein develops this reasoning in the *Blue Book* while discussing the idea of the "locality of thought":

> Perhaps the main reason why we are so strongly inclined to talk of the head as the locality of our thoughts is this: the existence of the words "thinking" and "thought" alongside the words denoting (bodily) activities, such as writing, speaking, etc., make us look for an activity, different from these but analogous to them, corresponding to the word "thinking" (BBB: 7).

What distinguishes thinking from "writing, speaking, etc." is that the latter are more uniformly identifiable through specific, observable patterns of bodily behavior, whereas thinking lacks a singular, readily identifiable mode of expression. Suppose "thinking", "writing", and "speaking" all belong to the family-resemblance category of ACTIVITIES. In many cases, we recognize that someone is thinking through their behavior – a furrowed brow, hesitation, verbalized reasoning, or even silence in the right context. In such moments, one might say we "see" that they are thinking, just as we might see that someone is in pain. However, unlike writing and speaking, thinking does not manifest in a single, easily demarcated outward form. Its criteria for recognition are more flexible and context-dependent.[4]

Reified "thought" – or "thinking", its eventive counterpart – is not wholly elusive to observation, but its external manifestations are more varied and diffuse than those of physical activities like writing or speaking. While we perceive writing and speaking through their direct perceptual impact – marks on a page, sounds in the air – thinking is registered through a looser set of behavioral cues, contextual clues, and discursive expressions. In some cases, recognizing thinking can be as immediate as seeing that someone is in pain; in

[4] In PI: §§307–308, when defending himself from his interlocutor's accusations that he is in fact a "behaviorist in disguise", Wittgenstein explains why his motivations for denying mental processes and states differ from those of behaviorists by resorting to an argument that is structurally similar to the one mobilized in the *Blue Book* about the location of thought. As I see it, both depend on the philosophical misprojection of certain ordinary language games (involving "process" and "states", in the case of the former; "location", in the case of the latter).

others, it requires inference. What is perceptually given in the case of physical action is often more determinate and precise than in the case of thinking, even if this does not mean that thinking is inherently hidden or inaccessible.

The featural poverty of the abstract is often remedied by borrowing features and their associated inferences from more concrete entities within the same conceptual category. These transitive analogical mappings from concrete to abstract are a core principle in linguistic analysis in cognitive semantics, a field that often acknowledges its Wittgensteinian inspiration (cf. Rosch & Mervis 1975; Lakoff 1987: 12–57). Within this framework, originally proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, concepts derived from spatial experience – such as "up", "down", "behind", "inside", and "outside" – serve as source domains for metaphorical predication of features to abstracta (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). This process is evident in: the conceptualization of quantities in terms of spatial direction (e.g., "The number of infected patients is up/down"), including abstract quantities (e.g., "The price of oil is up/down"); the conceptualization of time in terms of spatial direction, as seen in Augustine's paradox (e.g., "Let's move our meeting forward to Wednesday"); the conceptualization of pitch and mood in terms of spatial positioning (e.g., "She played a low note on the piano" and "He was feeling down") (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: Ch. 4; Boroditsky 2000). Similar ideas seem to drive Schroeder's considerations when he identifies as a relevant cause of philosophical problems our presumptions that "[…] verbs of thinking must function like verbs of perception" (Schroeder 2006: 166).

### *2.6 (VI) PHILOSOPHICAL EMULATION OF SCIENCE & (VII) QUEST FOR THE UNCONDITIONED*

Items (I)–(V) outline how analogies within a family-resemblance conceptual category can lead to feature projection between language games, giving rise to misleading philosophical pictures and their corresponding paradoxes. However, (VI) and (VII) require separate examination as distinct manifestations of metaphilosophical pictures, since they reflect two key perspectives on the nature of philosophical activity itself. In the case of (VI) PHILOSOPHICAL EMULATION OF SCIENCE, philosophers tend to develop explanatory theories rather than dissolve questions through grammatical reminders, mirroring the methodologies of the empirical sciences. This inclination reflects a broader aspiration to apply empirical and causal frameworks to philosophical inquiry,

much like scientific methodologies. The motivation for this projection likely stems from the shared conceptual category of epistemic activities, where philosophy and science overlap in certain features.

The allure of scientific rigor and explanatory power can obscure the linguistic and conceptual underpinnings of philosophical puzzles, as philosophers strive for systematic explanations akin to those in the natural sciences. However, this emulation risks overlooking the unique linguistic and conceptual challenges that define philosophical problems. The philosophical emulation of science corresponds to two items in Baker & Hacker's list: "asking and answering questions in the way of science" and our craving for explanations, or the "urge to explain phenomena, to answer the question 'Why?', [which] lies at the root of the scientific endeavor to render nature intelligible" (Baker & Hacker 2005: 283). In Schroeder's survey, it aligns with "scientific explanations […] and the conflation of empirical and conceptual considerations" (Schroeder 2006: 166).

Similarly, the attempt to emulate the methodology of the formal sciences, particularly mathematics, underlies the (VII) QUEST FOR THE UNCONDITIONED. This quest, defined by the pursuit of ultimate truths or foundational principles beyond contingent limitations, mirrors mathematical methodologies, where certainty is grounded in indisputable intuitions. In Baker & Hacker's typology, this corresponds to our craving for necessities (Baker & Hacker 2005: 283). Philosophers engaged in this quest seek to establish indubitable foundations or axioms, much like the certainty pursued in formal disciplines. By examining these philosophical pictures through the analogies they rely on – i.e., between philosophy, the empirical sciences, and the formal sciences – we can better understand the methodological approaches and epistemic aspirations that shape philosophical inquiry. The tension between explanatory frameworks borrowed from the empirical sciences and the quest for foundational certainties akin to formal disciplines underscores philosophy's identity crisis, caught between divergent methodologies and epistemic goals. A comprehensive analysis of these philosophical pictures and their analogical fallacies, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

## *3. Conclusion*

Let us now recapitulate the main arguments presented in the previous sections. In §1, we examined how Wittgenstein's later method replaced the sense-

nonsense distinction with a pragmatic focus on use, leading to synoptic presentations as a way to dissolve philosophical confusion by exposing conceptual interconnections. In §2, I used Glock's typology to show that seemingly distinct causes of perplexity are actually steps in a single cognitive process. I also indicated how Baker & Hacker's and Schroeder's frameworks align with Glock's categories. §2.1–§2.3 traced how analogies structure family-resemblance concepts, fueling a craving for generality and the projection of features between language games, leading to misleading conceptual mappings – e.g., treating thoughts as objects with boundaries and locations. §2.4 analyzed philosophical pictures, particularly the inner-outer model of mind and world, which, while heuristically useful in ordinary discourse, becomes misleading when taken as an ontological reality. In §2.5, I examined how phenomenology shapes picture formation, with perceptual experience serving as a source domain for conceptual metaphors. This aligns with cognitive semantics and conceptual metaphor theory, reinforcing Wittgenstein's relevance to contemporary inquiries into conceptual change. Finally, §2.6 addressed metaphilosophical pictures, including the emulation of science and the quest for the unconditioned, which reflect comparisons between philosophy, the natural sciences, and the formal sciences. These shape methodological biases, illustrating how epistemic aspirations influence philosophical discourse.

Taken together, these elements reveal that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is best understood not merely as a critique of philosophical mistakes, but as an investigation into the deep-seated tendencies that give rise to them. What emerges is a view of philosophy as a struggle against the gravitational pull of language itself – its analogies, metaphors, and pictures – which, while indispensable to everyday communication, easily become sources of confusion when transposed into theoretical reflection. Far from being incidental, these figurative patterns constitute the very fabric of our conceptual frameworks and, in doing so, continuously shape both the emergence and the persistence of philosophical problems. Wittgenstein's method, therefore, does not seek to eliminate these patterns altogether, but to make them visible, freeing us – not from language itself – but from the hold that unnoticed pictures and misplaced analogies exert on our thinking.[5]

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